

In the Spotlight

THE UNION OF CATHOLIC APOSTOLATE

in

CANADA



Beginnings

The year 1990 saw the birth of the UAC in Canada with the establishment of two groups, Camaldoli in Edmonton, Alberta and Elisabetta Sanna, in Calgary, Alberta. Fr. Joseph Schmelz and Fr. Erik Riechers were the first formators of these groups. From these beginnings, through the influence of the Pallottine Fathers and Brothers (SAC), St. Vincent's charism spread. In the face of the rapid growth of the UAC in Canada and in compliance with the many documents on the UAC including early drafts of the General Statutes, it was decided that a National Coordination Council, or Center as it was then called, should be formed. In the Fall of 1994 such a council met for the first time in Calgary, Alberta and Fr. Erik Riechers, SAC, was chosen to be the President; there was also a Secretary and Treasurer. Under the General Statutes of 1999 the regulations of the Canadian National Coordination Council (CNCC) were the first to be approved "ad experimentum" by the General Coordination Council in December 2000.

National Coordination Council

The CNCC regulations include the invitation to new groups to send representatives to the CNCC full assembly or "table" after two years of formation. The CNCC meets three times a year to address the concerns, and issues that come from growth and their attempts to live by the example of Jesus Christ through the vision of St. Vincent Pallotti. The members at the CNCC "table", now number eighteen.

Member Groups

There are presently over 200 members in a total of 20 groups. In addition to the original groups in Alberta, there are groups in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; in Moncton, New Brunswick; in Kitchener, Ontario; and in Didsbury and Red Deer, Alberta. Each group is autonomous in its internal structure and order but all are connected in community by the common vision of the Founder.

Formation and Admission

The CNCC has just completed its first year of a newly established one-year Preparatory Formation program for those individuals who have a serious interest in joining the UAC. It consists of ten evening sessions. By the last session, the individuals form one or more groups, choose a group name and leader. A letter requesting formal admission to the UAC accompanied by a recommendation from the formators affirming the successful completion of the prescribed preparatory formation is forwarded to the CNCC. Once accepted by the CNCC, the new group(s) is invited to a Celebration of Commitment during which each new member makes an Act of Apostolic Commitment and a member of the UAC presents them with the Star Cross pin, Canada's symbol for the UAC¹ as the President presents them by name to the members assembled.

¹ The symbol incorporates the logo used by the GCC; an explanation of the symbol appears at the end of this article.

After their preparatory formation, groups begin to build community. During the next two years, or more if needed, the manual of formation, Called By Name, is studied and following that, groups enter into various apostolates as part of their on-going formation.

Annual Events

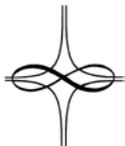
Formation and community building are sustained by three regular events open to all members. A Study Day is held in one of three different cities each year for anyone interested in learning about or deepening their understanding of the UAC, its spirit and mission. These same cities host the Cenacle, a relaxed day which combines spiritual and social activity and sustains the sense of community in and among the various Union groups. Appropriate themes for these events are selected each year by the host groups. There is also an annual weekend silent preached retreat which focuses on the spiritual growth of individual members. Its theme is drawn from Pallottine spirituality.

Steps in the growth of the UAC in Canada

In 2000, following a suggestion from the Pallottine Fathers (the SAC group), the NCC began work on a National Pastoral Plan to assist the growing Union in the next seven to ten years. Work on the plan was a major part of the preparations for the first Canadian National Congress held in June, 2003. (See more information in the Newsletter.) Twenty four resolutions, discussed and passed by the members present, will be incorporated into the National Pastoral Plan. Its implementation will be the ongoing work of the CNCC in the months and years to come.

A Word of Gratitude

The UAC members of Canada wish to express their thanks to the members of the North German Province of the SAC, who have acted as formators, mentors and guides. Their enthusiasm, perseverance and passion have inspired many lay disciples who have presented themselves for membership. In the city of Red Deer the UAC, has grown from one group in 1995 to eleven in 2003 mainly through the dedication of the Pallottine Fathers of the SAC.



An explanation of the Star Cross by Fr. Erik Riechers

The symbol of the Union of Catholic Apostolate

The four curved lines represent the *four directions of the earth*. They express the *universal nature* of our Pallottine vocation, and our desire to bring together *the fullness of the Church* for the sake of the apostolate.

These four curved lines come together to form *a cross*. This symbolises our *commitment to Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. He is the reason for our coming together, and he is the one who holds us together.

The four curved lines remain *open to all four directions* of the earth. Our communion in Jesus Christ is *open to all peoples*, open to serving all their needs and to bringing the Gospel to *all people, places and situations*.

The four curved lines are held together by the *mathematical sign for infinity*. This represents our Pallottine *experience of God as Infinite Love and Infinite Mercy*. As Pallottines we believe that the heart and soul of our life lies in knowing, experiencing and following the God of Infinite Love, and that he holds us all together.

Finally, if the entire symbol is gazed upon from a distance, it makes the impression of a *star*. This represents the star of *Epiphany*, which the Magi followed in order to find Christ. It is meant to express our own commitment in the Union *to lead others to Jesus*, as did St. Vincent Pallotti himself. Just as the Magi knew they would find Jesus Christ if they followed the star wherever it went, so too contemporary men and women who see this star must know that they will find Christ if they follow those who wear *this symbol of our charism*.